

### **Myth vs. Fact and FAQ: The Truth about Indiana's Common Core Standards**

In August of 2010, the State Board of Education (SBOE) voted unanimously to adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as Indiana's new academic standards. This decision came after nearly three years of discussion among state and education leaders and following a series of improvements to the proposed draft standards based on feedback from educators. Following adoption, the CCSS became known as Indiana's Common Core Standards (INCC). Schools across Indiana began implementing INCC in kindergarten classrooms during the 2011-2012 school year. Gradual implementation of INCC will continue until they are fully implemented during the 2014-2015 school year.

Indiana chose these standards because they are the best for Hoosier students. INCC are designed to ensure every student in our state leaves high school prepared for college or the workforce by focusing on foundational skills necessary for students to be successful. Further, INCC are clearer and deeper than previous standards, allowing students to thoroughly understand basic concepts before moving on and building more complex skills.

Indiana law requires the State Board of Education (not Indiana's General Assembly or the federal government) to adopt clear, concise and jargon free academic standards for each grade level (K-12). The law requires the standards to be comparable to national and international academic standards. Indiana followed this process to adopt INCC, the same process used to adopt all previous Indiana academic standards.

The federal government is **not** involved in the development or adoption of state academic standards. Indiana's adoption of INCC has been entirely voluntary. The development of INCC has been a state-led and student-focused initiative from the very beginning.

One of the many components of INCC is the flexibility in allowing local educators to determine how to teach and implement the standards. If INCC are considered the building code that ensures each "home" is considered safe and of high quality, the architect and contractor must still design and build the home. Under INCC, all students will have the skills necessary to succeed after high school, but the way schools teach those skills will vary from community to community based on the needs of each community's student population.

**Myth 1: The Common Core State Standards are an effort by the federal government to nationalize education through a national curriculum and force states to teach all students the same way.**

**Fact:** The CCSS were collaboratively created by the National Governors Association Center (NGA Council), the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), Achieve, Inc., ACT, College Board, and a Standards Development Work Group of teachers and leaders at all levels of education and business. **The federal government was not part of this collaborative effort that created the standards.** The CCSS were voluntarily adopted by states. Furthermore, the CCSS are a set of standards and NOT a curriculum. A curriculum is a prescribed map, schedule, and method for teaching a set of standards. The curriculum will be left to local districts and teachers.

**Myth 2: Referring to the CCSS as "national standards" is the most accurate way to describe them.**

**Fact:** The CCSS are state standards (NOT national standards), because they were built by a collection of state leaders and education policymakers and voluntarily adopted by states. The standards aim to ensure our students are ready to compete on a national and international stage, which is in the best interest of Indiana's students. The term "national standards" implies an overarching arm of federal control, which simply is not present in the CCSS.

**Myth 3:** States only chose to adopt the CCSS because they wanted federal Race to the Top (RTTT) funds or the opportunity to be granted flexibility through a waiver of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

**Fact:** Indiana opted out of the RTTT competition in April 2010 and voluntarily adopted the CCSS based on their merit in August 2010. Indiana did not apply for a federal ESEA waiver until November 2011, which means Indiana adopted the standards well before the waiver program was announced in September 2011. Furthermore, Virginia and Alaska recently received ESEA waivers and are among the few states that have not adopted the CCSS.

**Myth 4:** States may NOT incorporate their own state prerogatives into the new CCSS.

**Fact:** Any state that adopts the CCSS may add 15 percent of its own content on top of the core standards. In Indiana, local school districts may supplement INCC with any additional content they believe is necessary to meet their students' needs. And local school districts and educators decide how to teach their students the content.

**Myth 5:** INCC dictate to teachers precisely how they must teach.

**Fact:** Like other academic standards, INCC only outline the skills students need, or the “what.” Academic standards do not outline or prescribe how to teach those skills. The “how” is still up to the individual teachers and should be based on their students' knowledge, skills, needs and abilities. Teachers' creative talents are still a vital part classroom achievement. It can even be argued that INCC provide more latitude for creativity, because they are more focused on the key skills kids need—unlike our previous standards, which cover more content with less depth.

**Myth 6:** INCC do little to help our children be better prepared.

**Fact:** On the contrary, thanks to INCC, commonalities among state standards will allow for less disruption in a child's education if he/she moves across state lines, a benefit of particular interest to our country's military families. INCC also guarantee an accurate comparison between the academic success of Indiana's students and that of students from other states and countries. INCC will help ensure Indiana's students are prepared to compete in a global economy.

INCC are designed to be sure every student leaves high school prepared for college and the workforce. In fact, INCC are actually more rigorous and focus on in-depth mastery of topics as opposed to previous standards that were characterized as “a mile wide but only an inch deep.” Therefore, they are more robust and reflect relevant knowledge and skills necessary after high school.

**Myth 7:** INCC lower reading standards.

**Fact:** Actually, INCC pushes students to read at even higher levels earlier in their school careers. For example, the current standard for a ninth grade reading level will become the new standard for a seventh grade reading level once INCC is fully implemented. The unfortunate fact that some students graduate high school lacking appropriate reading skills was a driving force behind the development of the common standards.

**Myth 8:** The INCC require grade 12 students to read mostly nonfiction in their English/Language Arts classes, which prevents students from learning culture through high quality literature.

**Fact:** INCC call for 70 percent of ALL TEXTS read in all grade 12 classes (including classes in subjects such as science and history) to be nonfiction. That's why INCC also include literacy standards—to emphasize the role content-area teachers

must play in literacy efforts to ensure their students are learning how to read within different disciplines of thought. For example, biology teachers must expose students to texts that are similar to what real-life biologists read.

**Myth 9:** Hoosier taxpayers will pay more for technology and curriculum updates under INCC than they did under Indiana’s previous academic standards.

**Fact:** If we are to prepare our students for 21<sup>st</sup> century college and career opportunities, an upgrade to academic technology services across the state will be required no matter what academic standards are in place. Further, Indiana is already a national leader in integrating technology into the classroom, with 66 percent of all tested students taking ISTEP+ online.

**Myth 10:** Indiana’s students will be tested with computers so that the state can track students’ into long-term career paths at very young ages.

**Fact:** This is absurd. As previously stated, Indiana is already leading the nation for its use of technology in the classroom for instruction and assessment. Preparing our students for success in college and workforce requires them to be technology savvy. There is a new achievement gap emerging among our students—the gap between those who are proficient with technology and those who are not. Every decision we make about education—from academic standards to digital delivery models—must be based upon what is best for Indiana’s students.

**Myth 11:** Indiana’s existing standards were judged superior to INCC.

**Fact:** Indiana’s existing standards were deemed impressive by the Fordham Institute’s “State of the States” report in 2011. In fact, both Indiana’s math and English/Language Arts standards were given an “A” grade. However, because the benefits of implementing INCC would increase Indiana’s attentiveness to complex texts and math coherency, Fordham also said, “such enhancements [in the form of the CCSS] would benefit Indiana’s already-strong standards.”

**Myth 12:** INCC will replace ALL Indiana Academic Standards in all subject areas.

**Fact:** INCC only provide new standards for English/Language Arts and math. Current Indiana Academic Standards will still be used for all other courses. For example, Indiana standards will be used to measure growth in all social studies and science classes. INCC Literacy Standards are guidelines for best practice and will not be assessed on the PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) exam in 2014.